

Minutes from a Meeting of the Concordia Council on Student Life
Held on February 13, 2009
SGW Campus H-769, 11:45am

PRESENT: Ms. Elizabeth Morey (Chair), Ms. Lauren Broad (Secretary), Ms. Anna Barrafato, Mr. Gerald Beasley, Dr. Donald Boisvert, Dr. Catherine Bolton, Mr. Elie Chivi, Mr. Roger Côté, Ms. Catherine Dicaire, Ms. Melanie Drew, Ms. Angela Ghabban, Ms. Priscila Gomes, Ms. Keyana Kashfi, Ms. Cathy Lin, Ms. Lina Lipscombe, Mr. Kurt Reckziegel, Mr. Jean-Philippe Savard, Ms. Katie Sheahan, Ms. Laura Stanbra, Ms. Brigitte St-Laurent, Mr. Devin Wells.

ABSENT WITH REGRETS: Ms. Claudie Boujaklian, Mr. Jean Brisebois, Ms. Daniela Caputo, Ms. Marlene Gross, Ms. Katherine Hedrich, Mr. Mansimarjot Singh Samra, Ms. Lorraine Toscano, Ms. Rose Wangechi.

ABSENT: Ms. Johanne De Cubellis.

GUEST: Mr. Colin Goldfinch, Ms. Louyse Lussier.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Chair called the meeting to order. Ms. Gomes moved to approve the agenda. Ms. Drew seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR

The Chair welcomed the members of Council to the meeting, which was called in addition to the set schedule of meetings, in order to deal with the budget deliberations at hand. The Chair noted that the Open Forum on the Presidential Panel on the Student Experience had just been held prior to the CCSL meeting. She thanked those who participated, and added that a lot of interesting discussion had taken place. The Chair encouraged anyone with additional suggestions or ideas on the matter to contact Dr. Boisvert.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF JANUARY 30TH, 2009

Ms. Stanbra moved to approve the minutes and Ms. Sheahan seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Mr. Côté notified the members of Council that there had been another informative working session on February 11th. Those in attendance reviewed the issue raised at the January 30th CCSL meeting concerning the Student Advocate Program (SAP) and Legal Information Services (LIS) offered by Advocacy & Support Services, as well as the Student Advocacy Center (SAC) and Legal Information Center (LIC) offered by the Concordia Student Union (CSU). The working session was designed to shed light on the types of services and activities offered, as well as the financial aspects of the programs. At the working session, the students in attendance had confirmed that their primary focus was to keep the increase that is being forecasted in the Student Services fee to students as low as possible. Mr. Côté informed CCSL members that following the working session, the Directors of Student Services had reviewed the operational budget again and had prepared another updated version of the proposed 2009-2012 Student Services budget, Version 3. The Version 3 Student Services Budget Proposal was distributed to members of CCSL. Version 3 had been developed with the assumption that Advocacy & Support Services would no longer offer the SAP and LIS. The resulting proposed Student Services per credit fee increase to students was \$0.04 in 2009-2010, \$0.03 in 2010-2011 and \$0.04 in 2011-2012. Mr. Chivi asked if this information was for Student Services and Recreation & Athletics and Mr. Côté confirmed that it was only for the Student Services sector, and that the Recreation & Athletics sector proposed a zero increase to their fee. Dr. Boisvert asked if the CSU would be able to provide more information on the budgets and statistics for the SAC and LIC that they offer. Mr. Reckziegel replied that Mr. Colin Goldfinch, VP External of the CSU, was on his way to present the information requested.

5. STUDENT SERVICES/RECREATION & ATHLETICS BUDGETS

Mr. Côté referred the Council to Version 3 of the Student Services Budget Proposal 2009-2012 and noted that the changes from the previous budget proposal were identified by the green print. Mr. Côté restated the fact that the removal of the SAP and LIS from the previous budget had resulted in a Student Services per credit fee increase to students of \$0.04 in 2009-2010, \$0.03 in 2010-2011 and \$0.04 in 2011-2012. The budget would generate a surplus in year 1 (2009-2010), which would be carried over in the following years to offset a deficit that is predicted to occur in year 3 (2011-2012). Mr. Wells asked for more details of what emerged from the working session held on February 11th, and asked if there was any agreement that was decided upon. Mr. Côté pointed out that Mr. Goldfinch would present more information from the CSU upon his arrival. The Student Services information had been shared at the working session regarding the financial impact of the SAP and LIS, and it was proposed that there was still a significant need for the services they provided. He highlighted the necessity of addressing the needs of graduate students, who are currently not covered by the CSU services. Mr. Côté added that the purpose of the working session was not to come to an agreement, but rather to share information. He wished to emphasize the fact that the Student Services Directors had heard the desire to minimize the fee increase to students and that they had responded with a proposal that was considerably lower than the budget proposed on January 9th, 2009. Ms. Gomes expressed her concern for existing employees if the SAP and LIS were to be removed. Mr. Côté replied that the University's only financial commitment was to one permanent employee on staff and added that there was certainly no lack of need for employees to help students. Therefore it would have to be determined where this person could best be reallocated. Ms. Gomes stressed the importance of a smooth transition: if the SAP and LIS were to be removed, the CSU would not currently be ready to handle a doubling of the number of students who use their services. She would not want to see the quality of service to students decline, a consequence that would defeat the purpose of consolidation. Dr. Boisvert noted that the CSU had reported at the working session that the annual salary commitments for the SAC and LIC were approximately \$90,000 and that they collect approximately \$180,000 from student fees. He suggested that the balance be used to expand and improve on their services. Ms. Kashfi told the Council that the advocacy clinic offered by the CSU was only introduced last year and that they would have to review the past year's performance to determine what changes would need to be made to meet the demands of students. She noted that much more thought would have to go into how the University and the CSU could work together to maintain and improve the services. Ms. Sheahan informed the CCSL that the question had been posed at the working session of what was the main concern of the student representative of CCSL that was driving them. The response that was given was that cost was the main issue and that their priority was to reduce the burden of fees to students. Ms. Sheahan pointed out that the response to that answer was Version 3 of the proposed budget, which further reduced the Student Services fee per credit. Ms. Sheahan suggested that perhaps more clarification was needed regarding the expectations of all members of CCSL, since some seemed to be unsatisfied. Mr. Chivi commented that although cost is a major concern, another is the consistency of programs offered at the University. He believes firmly that a student-run service can better represent a fellow student than an employee of the University. Mr. Chivi asked if there was room for any more decreases in the Student Services fee. Mr. Côté responded that there is always room for more decreases, but the consequences must be considered quite seriously. His suggestion was that the budget should not suffer further decreases, as this would lead to a decrease in the quality of services offered to students. Dr. Boisvert expressed his disappointment that there was a feeling that the services provided by the University were not in support of the student body. He noted a clear difference between the information provided to date by the University and that from the CSU and added that he did not feel that taking choice away from students was a wise decision. Mr. Chivi responded that he had asked if a further decrease in the fee was possible because he felt the decreases to date were only the result of student pressure. Therefore he wondered if further cuts were feasible but simply not being explored. Mr. Côté hoped that the CCSL would recognize the openness of the budget preparations and noted the effort that had been given to assure complete transparency in every proposal. Ms. Drew asked that if the SAP and LIS were removed to lower the fee, which would seemingly meet the concerns being presented, then what else would need to be done for the budget proposal to be approved. Ms. Gomes suggested a partnership between the CSU and the University to ensure a smooth transition and that the responsible way to do so would be to secure a small budget to assist with the changes. Ms. Drew noted the lack of statistics and information from the CSU to properly analyze the viability of removing the services provided by the University. She added that the new proposal would not assume a partnership between the existing University services and the CSU: the existing University services would be eliminated completely. Ms. Kashfi said that she did not feel that a major choice would be taken away from students and she believed that many students were not even aware of the difference between the two current providers. Dr. Bolton expressed that in her experience working with the advocate services provided by

both the University and the CSU, she felt there was a clear difference in the quality of services provided, and that the quality of service provided by the SAP has exceeded that of the CSU advocates. She noted her discomfort with the insinuation that University employees do not work tirelessly on behalf of students. **Mr. Chivi expressed that he wished Dr. Bolton had provided her comments on the performance of the CSU advocates and legal services earlier on in discussions.* Ms. Lipscombe said that she was concerned about whether or not future students would be able to depend on the CSU services alone in the long-run. Ms. Kashfi assured the Council that the services offered by the CSU would continue to exist based on the fact that they collect student fees to ensure that they will be made available. Ms. Sheahan said that it was important to recognize that the first budget proposed at the January 9th CCSL meeting was to table the budget, which would simply launch the process. The first version was a “do nothing” scenario, and since then many measures have been taken and considered to reduce the fee burden to students. She added that everyone involved in the process was advocating on behalf of the students. Ms. Kashfi wished to inform the Council that the CSU was open for discussion to determine how students may pay the lowest fee possible without losing the quality of service. She added that she wished she had heard feedback earlier regarding the quality of their services so that they could work to improve them. Mr. Chivi informed the members of CCSL that the CSU’s position is that they are fundamentally opposed to any fee increases: that it is in their mandate to resist a fee increase. He acknowledged that all members of CCSL were working in the students best interests, however he felt that only the student members of Council were working to lower the Student Services fee. Ms. Gomes commented that their intent as students was to solve the issue of duplicating services, as well as lowering the fee. Mr. Goldfinch, VP External of the CSU, joined the meeting to give a presentation on the financial aspects of the CSU’s Student Advocate Center (SAC) and Legal Information Center (LIC). He explained that the two services obtained approximately \$189,000 annually in revenues collected from the CSU fee to students, with \$137,000 going to the SAC and approximately \$51,000-\$52,000 to the LIC. The SAC budget is divided between 3 major expenses: salaries and benefits; honoraria; miscellaneous budget (including in-house training for advocates, conferences, day to day running of the office, etc.). The LIC budget is spent on: salaries; fixed expenses (legal library, etc.); flexible expenses (workshops, publicity, office supplies, etc.). He noted that the LIC and SAC handle approximately 100 cases per semester. Ms. Kashfi confirmed that the SAC salaries included one senior coordinator (a.k.a. senior advocate) and four advocates (current number on staff), who see an average of five cases each per week, depending on the time of year. Mr. Côté addressed the Council to say that the next step would be to make a decision on the budget: to decide whether or not they wished to support any of the proposals. He added that the Version 3 proposal, dated February 12, 2009, was sensitive to the objective of lowering the fee. Mr. Chivi inquired as to when would be the last possible date to vote on the budget. Mr. Côté explained that the new budget would take effect with the new fiscal year, June 1, 2009. According to the MELS guidelines on the Frais Institutionnels Obligatoires (FIO), the CSU and GSA would have to agree with the increase in the Student Services fee as well as the Student Services and Recreation & Athletics budgets before it could go to the Board of Governors for final approval. Considering this, Mr. Côté stressed that there was a significant time restriction. Mr. Côté reiterated that a motion had not been put forward for approval, but rather that Version 3 of the budget proposal had been tabled only. He confirmed that by approving Version 3, the Council would be approving the removal of the University’s SAP and LIS: the removal of the services would be implied. Mr. Côté presented a draft resolution on the Student Services and Recreation & Athletics Budget and Fees (see attached document). The document was modified to reflect the proposed Student Services fee from Version 3 of the budget proposal (dated February 12, 2009). It was also updated to reflect the fact that the Recreation & Athletics fee is to remain at the current level. Mr. Côté repeated for clarification that the Student Services budget reflected in the draft motion was dated February 12, 2009, while the Recreation and Athletics budget reflected in the draft motion was dated January 30, 2009. He added that if agreed upon, this would take effect June 1, 2009 and that no changes would be made to the level of the fee of the 2011-2012 fiscal year, unless otherwise decided upon at CCSL. Ms. Sheahan moved to approve the motion. Mr. Côté seconded the motion. A discussion ensued between members of the Council as to whether or not they were ready to accept the motion. Mr. Chivi requested for more time to review the draft motion with their constituencies. Ms. Kashfi suggested that the CSU and GSA representatives at CCSL bring the draft to their respective student unions for approval, in order to have a definite answer for CCSL in time for the March 6th meeting. The Chair asked Ms. Sheahan and Mr. Côté, who had motioned and seconded the motion respectively, if they would agree to table the draft motion to the next meeting. They both agreed. Dr. Boisvert asked Mr. Chivi if the CSU would be willing to support a modest increase in the Student Services fee if the SAP and the LIS were terminated. Mr. Chivi requested that the minutes reflect that they would entertain the idea based on the fact that a clear effort had been made on both sides to reduce the fee to students as much as possible.

6. NEW BUSINESS

No new business was discussed.

7. NEXT MEETING

March 6, 2009 10am Loyola Campus – AD210

8. TERMINATION OF MEETING

Ms. Drew motioned to terminate the meeting. Ms. Kashfi seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

**Minutes amended to include this sentence following request from Mr. Chivi at the March 6, 2009 CCSL meeting.*